

LORD VERNON COAKER
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

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17th February 2025

Dear Baroness Goldie,

Annabel,

During an Oral Question on Air Defence on Thursday 9th January 2025, you asked for a letter providing further detail on plans regarding the MOD's future capabilities.

While I would not wish to pre-empt the modernisation plans which will be set out in the Strategic Defence Review, I must state that the MOD is anything but complacent on this matter. I can confirm that the following projects are already well underway and will directly contribute to the modernisation of our Air Defences:

- Increasing the number of **SkySabre** (Medium Range Ground Based Air Defence) launchers to 9.
- Investing in the development of **Sea Viper Evolution** missiles to increase protection against ballistic missiles, on track to enter service in 2028.
- Purchasing **E-7 Wedgetail** Airborne Early Warning aircraft which will vastly improve our ability to detect incoming threats and ensure the best asset can defeat it, entering service later this year.

The Strategic Defence Review will help us to further define and understand in greater detail the threats we face today and those expected tomorrow, allowing us to even more effectively place investment to bolster our military capabilities.

Baroness Annabel Goldie
The House of Lords
Westminster
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I can also confirm that we are not just reviewing our own capabilities in isolation, but rather we are working to boost interoperability with our Allies to complement the overall mix of capabilities across NATO; we will, of course, remain closely aligned with NATO's planning process as part of this work.

Internationally we are working on:

- The **DIAMOND** initiative. Which aims to better connect various capabilities across Europe to ensure an integrated system for quick decision making, allowing us to destroy targets quicker. We are working with the other DIAMOND signatories to agree the timetable for actions.
- The **European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI)** seeks to establish a ground-based integrated European air defence system with anti-ballistic missile capability. The UK signed a Letter of Intent to join ESSI, ensuring the UK plays a part in shaping the future of this programme.
- The UK has signed a Letter of Intent to participate in the **European Long Range Strike Approach (ELSA)** alongside five other NATO nations. ELSA is an opportunity to promote collaborative programmes such as the Future Cruise / Anti-Ship Weapon (FC/ASW) and UK-German deep precision strike capabilities developed through the Trinity House Agreement.
- The **Trinity House Agreement** signed with Germany in October included a commitment to identify "opportunities for industrial collaboration and investment to achieve closer working on countering threats through Integrated Air and Missile Defence" and to cohere "Integrated Air and Missile Defence activity through a variety of international collaborations.

I hope this provides a fuller explanation of our position. I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vernon Coaker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

LORD VERNON COAKER